(c) whether the programme has attained commercial viability?

THE MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) As a part of phase-wise development of a mining system capable of operation up to water depth of 6 km., various technology developmental activities were carried out by National Institute of Ocean Technology, Chennai (the technical arm of the Ministry of Earth Sciences) during the last five years. As a first phase of development, a prototype shallow bed mining system capable of working up to a depth of 500 m was designed and developed. The system has been demonstrated successfully at a water depth of 451 meters off Malvan coast. Development of integrated mining module with collector and crusher is under progress. An in-situ soil sampler to measure the soil bearing strength capable of operating at a water depth of 6 km was also designed and developed. This was successfully tested at a water depth of 5200 m .

(b) No, Sir. The semi-continuous pilot plant of 500 kg per day capacity has been established. This would suffice for validating various processes developed by research laboratories in India *viz.*, Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (earlier Regional Research Laboratory), Bhubneshwar, National Metallurigical Laboratory, Jamshedpur and Hindustan Zinc Ltd. at Udaipur. The pilot plant has already exceeded the laboratory recovery efficiency in respect of metal values (copper, nickel and cobalt).

(c) No, Sir. The Poymetallic Nodule programme is not commercially viable at current prices of metals.

Implementation of Sachhar Committee Report

*36. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps planned to implement the recommendations of the Sachhar Committee Report; and

(b) the reasons for the delay in implementation thereof?

THE MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI A.R. ANTULAY): (a) and (b) The recommendations of the Sachhar Committee have already been considered by Government and a decision taken regarding the follow up action. The salient features are given below:-

(i) Targeted intervention is proposed for improvement of basic amenities and employment opportunities in 90 identified minority concentration districts which are backward in terms of various developmental parameters.

(ii) Appropriate measures will be taken to improve the deficiency in civic amenities and economic opportunities in 338 identified towns and cities with substantial population of minorities including Muslims. An inter-ministerial task force is already working on this to recommend appropriate strategies in this regard.

(iii) An inter-ministerial group will plan and monitor the implementation of a comprehensive programme for skill and entrepreneurship development among the Muslim community and for ensuring easy and smooth access to credit to the minorities, and Muslims in particular. "Clusters", having

a substantial presence of the Muslim community, especially of those engaged in artisanal activities, will be given focused attention.

(iv) Public sector banks will open more branches in Muslim concentration areas, financial institutions will promote micro-finance among the minorities, especially women, public sector banks will monitor the disposal of loan applications for minorities and maintain reasons for rejection, Reserve Bank of India will maintain district-wise and bank-wise data regarding disposal of applications on its website and the flow of credit to minorities, including Muslims would be monitored regularly. The data can be accessed under the Right to Information Act.

(v) A multi-pronged strategy will be adopted for addressing the problem of educational backwardness of the Muslim community. The outreach of upper primary schools will be expanded, particularly for Muslim girls, and where necessary, with "girls only" schools, more Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) will be opened in areas with substantial Muslim population; priority would be given to the opening of secondary and senior secondary schools in areas of Muslim concentration, a special literacy drive will be taken up in districts with a substantial population of Muslims, Block Institutes of Teacher Education (BITEs) would be established to impart pre-service and in-service training to primary, upper primary and secondary level teachers in such areas, additional allocation will be made for opening women's hostels in schools and universities, the Madarasa Modernization Programme will be revised to enhance the components eligible for assistance, the mid-day meal scheme will be extended, especially in educationally backward Muslim concentration blocks and the question of equivalence of qualifications from madarsas for subsequent access to higher education will be addressed.

(vi) Three scholarship schems *viz.* a merit-cum-means scholarship scheme for 20,000 students from the minority communities for pursuing technical and professional courses, a pre-matric and a post-matric scholarship scheme will be introduced. A revised coaching and remedial tuition scheme would be designed to improve the employability and academic performance of students belonging to the minority communities. Guidelines have been issued already to improve the representation of minorities, including Muslims in Government, public sector enterprises, public sector banks etc. The Corpus of the Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) would be augmented and its operations expanded and streamlined.

(vii) Dissemination of information regarding health and family welfare schemes will be done in Urdu and regional languages in such districts, blocks and towns with a substantial minority population. A basket of choice in contraception will also be made available, along with ensuring easy access to such services.

(viii) A comprehensive amendment of the Wakf Act is proposed to address existing deficiencies.

(ix) A suitable agency would assist in the development of Wakf properties so that the augmented income could be utilized for the purposes intended.

(x) All personnel, like Government employees, teachers, health personnel would be sensitized to the importance of diversity and social inclusion.

(xi) Civil Rights Centres will be opened in universities, beginning with Central universities.

(xii) A High Level Committee has been constituted to review the Delimitation Act and the concerns expressed by the Sachar Committee regarding anomalies in the representation of Muslims will be considered in the course of this review.

(xiii) It has been decided in principle to set up an Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) to look into grievances regarding discrimination. An expert group will study and recommend its structure and functions.

(xiv) In order to promote diversity and social inclusion in educational institutions, work places and living spaces, an expert group will be constituted to propose an appropriate "diversity index". Such an index can be the basis for providing incentives for better representation in all three areas mentioned above.

(xv) A National Data Bank (NDB) and an autonomous Assessment and Monitoring Authority (AMA) will be set up which will analyse the data so generated and suggest appropriate policies to Government on a continuous basis.

Unrecognised Diplomas and Degrees

*37. SHRI RAHUL BAJAJ:
SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many institutes are imparting training and issuing diplomas and degrees for technical courses such as marine engineering, etc. which are not recognised by appropriate authorities;

(b) if so, how many such cases have come to light during the last two years;

(c) the action taken to stop such practices at the time when these institutes advertise their courses in newspapers, etc. so that they do not play with the career prospects of students; and

(d) whether his Ministry would initiate public interest awareness campaign in media to save candidates from falling prey to such institutes?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) to (d) The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), is mandated by an Act of Parliament to ensure co-ordinated and integrated development of technical and management education and maintenance of standards throughout the country. As per records available with the AICTE, 273 institutions were found to be conducting technical education programmes without AICTE approval.

The AICTE has issued show cause notices to such technical institutions as to why action should not be taken against them for conducting the unapproved courses. The